

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

GENERAL ORDER

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

FILED

JAN 8 1999

CLERK
U. S. DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DIST. OF ALA.

Misc. # 2095

This court has carefully considered the attached Standards for Professional Conduct which have recently been adopted by the Alabama Trial Lawyers Association and the Alabama Defense Lawyers Association. The Standards have been reviewed and approved by the court's Lawyers Advisory Committee. The court commends the Alabama Defense Lawyers Association and the Alabama Trial Lawyers Association for their efforts to promote and maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and civility among the Bench and Bar, and hereby adopts the attached Standards for Professional Conduct. The judges of this court commit themselves to adherence to the Courts' Duties to Lawyers contained therein, and all lawyers practicing before this court are advised that the Lawyers' Duties to Other Counsel and Lawyers' Duties to the Court are standards which they are expected to observe.

The clerk is DIRECTED to distribute copies of this order and the attached Standards for Professional Conduct to all attorneys presently admitted to practice before this court, and to furnish copies to each attorney admitted to practice in the future at the time of admission.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 8th day of January, 1999.


W. HAROLD ALBRITTON
Chief United States District Judge

Myron H. Thompson

MYRON H. THOMPSON
United States District Judge

Ira Dement

IRA DEMENT
United States District Judge

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Preamble

A lawyer's conduct should be characterized at all times by personal courtesy and professional integrity in the fullest sense of those terms. In fulfilling our duty to represent a client vigorously as lawyers, we will be mindful of our obligations to the administration of justice, which is a truth-seeking process designed to resolve human and societal problems in a rational, peaceful, and efficient manner.

A judge's conduct should be characterized at all times by courtesy and patience toward all participants. As judges, we owe to all participants in a legal proceeding duties of respect, diligence, punctuality, and protection against unjust and improper criticism or attack.

Conduct that may be characterized as uncivil, abrasive, abusive, hostile, or obstructive impedes the fundamental goal of resolving disputes rationally, peacefully, and efficiently. Such conduct tends to delay and often deny justice.

The following standards are designed to encourage lawyers and judges to meet our obligations to each other, to litigants, and to the system of justice, and thereby achieve the twin goals of civility and professionalism which are hallmarks of a learned profession dedicated to public service.

We urge lawyers and judges to make a mutual and firm commitment to these standards. Voluntary adherence is intended to be a part of commitment by all participants to improve the administration of justice in Alabama courts.

These standards shall not be used as a basis for litigation or for sanctions or penalties. Nothing in these standards supersedes or detracts from existing disciplinary codes or alters existing standards of conduct against which lawyers negligence may be determined.

These standards are recommended for lawyers and judges participating in any proceeding in Alabama courts. Copies of these standards may be available to clients to reinforce our mutual obligation to maintain and foster these standards.

LAWYERS' DUTIES TO OTHER COUNSEL

1. We will practice our profession with a continuing awareness that our role is to advance the legitimate interests of our clients. In our dealings with others, we will not reflect the ill feelings of our clients. We will treat all other counsel, parties, and witnesses in a civil and courteous manner, not only in court, but also in all other written and oral communications.
2. We will not, even when called upon by a client to do so, abuse or indulge in offensive conduct directed to other counsel, parties, or witnesses. We will abstain from disparaging personal remarks or acrimony toward other counsel, parties, or witnesses. We will treat adverse witnesses and parties with fair consideration.
3. We will not encourage or knowingly authorize any person under our control to engage in conduct that would be improper if we were to engage in such conduct.
4. We will not, absent good cause, attribute bad motives or improper conduct to other counsel or bring the profession into disrepute by unfounded accusations of impropriety.
5. We will not seek court sanctions without first conducting a reasonable investigation and unless fully justified by the circumstances and necessary to protect our client's lawful interests.
6. We will adhere to all express promises and to agreements with other counsel, whether oral or in writing, and will adhere in good faith to all agreements implied by the circumstances or local customs.
7. When we reach an oral agreement on a proposed agreement or a stipulation and decide to commit it to writing, the drafter will endeavor in good faith to state the oral understanding accurately and completely. The drafter will provide the opportunity for review of the writing to other counsel. As drafts are exchanged between or among counsel, changes from prior drafts will be identified in the draft or otherwise explicitly brought to the attention of other counsel. We will not include in draft matters to which there has been no agreement without explicitly advising other counsel in writing of the addition.
8. We will endeavor to confer early with other counsel to assess settlement possibilities. We will not falsely hold out the possibility of settlement as a means to adjourn discovery or to delay trial.
9. In civil actions, we will stipulate to relevant matters if they are undisputed and if no good faith advocacy basis exists for not stipulating.
10. We will make good faith efforts to resolve by agreement our objections to matters contained in pleadings and discovery requests and objections.

11. We will not time the filing or service of motions or pleadings in any way that unfairly limits another party's opportunity to respond.
12. We will consult other counsel regarding scheduling matters in a good faith effort to avoid scheduling conflicts.
13. We will endeavor to accommodate previously scheduled dates for hearings, depositions, meetings, conferences, vacations, seminars, or other functions that produce good faith calendar conflicts on the part of other counsel. If we have been given an accommodation because of a calendar conflict, we will notify those who have accommodated us as soon as the conflict has been removed.
14. We will notify other counsel, and, if appropriate, the court or other persons, at the earliest possible time when hearings, depositions, meetings, or conferences are to be canceled or postponed. Early notice avoids unnecessary travel and expense of counsel and may enable the court to use the previously reserved time for other matters.
15. We will agree to reasonable requests for extensions of time and for waiver of procedural formalities, provided our client's legitimate rights will not be materially or adversely affected.
16. We will take depositions only when actually needed to ascertain facts or information or to perpetuate testimony. We will not take depositions for the purposes of harassment or to increase litigation expenses.
17. We will not engage in any conduct during a deposition that would not be appropriate in the presence of a judge.
18. We will not obstruct questioning during a deposition or object to deposition questions unless necessary under the applicable rules to preserve an objection or privilege for resolution by the court.
19. We will respond to document requests reasonably and not strain to interpret the request in an artificially restrictive manner to avoid disclosure of relevant and non-privileged documents. We will not produce documents in a manner designed to hide or obscure the existence of particular documents.
20. We will respond to interrogatories reasonably and will not strain to interpret them in an artificially restrictive manner to avoid disclosure of relevant and non-privileged information.
21. We will base our discovery objections on a good faith belief in their merit and will not object solely for the purpose of withholding or delaying the disclosure of relevant information.

22. When a draft order is to be prepared by counsel to reflect a court ruling, we will draft an order that accurately and completely reflects the court's ruling.
23. We will not ascribe a position to another counsel that counsel has not taken or otherwise seek to create an unjustified inference based on counsel's statements or conduct.
24. Unless specifically permitted or invited by the court, we will not send copies of correspondence between counsel to the court.

LAWYER'S DUTIES TO THE COURT

1. We will speak and write civilly and respectfully in all communications with the court.
2. We will be punctual and prepared for all court appearances so that all hearings, conferences, and trials may commence on time; if delayed, we will notify the court and counsel, if possible.
3. We will be considerate of the time constraints and pressures on the court and court staff inherent in their efforts to administer justice.
4. We will not engage in any conduct that brings disorder or disruption to the courtroom. We will advise our clients and witnesses appearing in court of the proper conduct expected and required there and, to the best of our ability, prevent our clients and witnesses from creating disorder and disruption.
5. We will not knowingly misrepresent, mischaracterize, misquote, or miscite facts or authorities in any oral or written communication to the court.
6. We will not write letters to the court in connection with a pending action, unless invited or permitted by the court.
7. Before dates for hearings or trials are set, or if that is not feasible, immediately after such date has been set, we will attempt to verify the availability of necessary participants and witnesses so we can promptly notify the court of any likely problems.
8. We will act and speak civilly to court marshals, clerks, court reporters, secretaries, and law clerks with an awareness that they, too, are an integral part of the judicial system.

COURT'S DUTIES TO LAWYERS

1. We will be courteous, respectful, and civil to lawyers, parties, and witnesses. We will maintain control of the proceedings, recognizing that judges have both the obligation and the authority to insure that all litigation proceedings are conducted in a civil manner.
2. We will not employ hostile, demeaning, or humiliating words in opinion or in written or oral communications with lawyers, parties, or witnesses.
3. We will be punctual in convening all hearings, meetings, and conferences; if delayed, we will notify counsel, if possible.
4. In scheduling all hearings, meetings, and conferences, we will be considerate of time schedules of lawyers, parties, and witnesses.
5. We will make all reasonable efforts to decide promptly all matters presented to us for decision.
6. We will give the issues in controversy deliberate, impartial, and studied analysis and consideration.
7. While endeavoring to resolve disputes efficiently, we will be considerate of the time constraints and pressures imposed on lawyers by the exigencies of litigation practice.
8. We recognize that a lawyer has a right and a duty to present a cause fully and properly, and that a litigant has a right to a fair and impartial hearing. Within the practical limits of time, we will allow lawyers to present proper arguments and to make a complete and accurate record.
9. We will not impugn the integrity or professionalism of any lawyer on the basis of the clients whom or the causes which a lawyer represents.
10. We will do our best to insure that court personnel act civilly toward lawyers, parties, and witnesses.
11. We will not adopt procedures that needlessly increase litigation expense.
12. We will bring to lawyers' attention uncivil conduct which we observe.